

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
AUGUST 5, 2020**

ITEM 1

SUBJECT

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PROPOSED STATEWIDE SUCTION DREDGE MINING GENERAL PERMIT

DISCUSSION

State law defines suction dredge mining as “the use of a mechanized or motorized system for the removing or assisting in the removal of, or the processing of, material from the bed, bank, or channel of a river, stream, or lake, in order to recover minerals.” Suction dredge mining was statutorily prohibited in California in 2009.

Senate Bill 637 (2015), amended the California Fish and Game Code and Water Code to require a miner to obtain a Water Board permit or letter stating no such permit is required, and a Department of Fish and Wildlife permit to suction dredge mine in California, and to allow the Water Boards to prohibit any use or method of using suction dredge equipment, and to specify conditions or areas where suction dredge mining discharges are prohibited to protect water quality.

Suction dredge mining activities have the potential to discharge pollutants. The federal Clean Water Act requires that discharges of pollutants to waters of the United States be regulated by a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Staff developed a proposed statewide general NPDES permit to regulate discharges from some forms of suction dredge mining. Staff released the proposed permit for public comment on May 12, 2020.

POLICY ISSUE

Should the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopt the proposed General Permit?

FISCAL IMPACT

If adopted, the proposed General Permit fees would be set at a level that would support administration of the permit.

REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT

If adopted, the proposed General Permit may impact Regional Water Board staff resources with permit enforcement workload.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is a public hearing for the State Water Board to receive oral public comments. The State Water Board will not consider adopting the proposed permit. Therefore, there is no staff recommendation at this time.